

## THE VOYAGE OF THE "CHEVERT" TO NEW GUINEA

MR. WILLIAM MACLEAY, of Sydney has, in a letter to the *Sydney Herald*, given an account of his expedition to New Guinea, an abstract of which, though so small in its results, will no doubt interest our readers.

The *Chevert* sailed from Port Jackson on the 18th of May last with a crew of twenty, together with a doctor, four zoological and three botanical collectors, Captain Onslow, and Mr. Macleay. The ship was fitted up chiefly with the object of making collections in all branches of Natural History in the islands of Torres Straits and in New Guinea.

The voyage from Sydney to Cape York occupied a month, five days being spent in the Palm Islands, and six at Cape Grenville. On the 4th of June a stoppage was made at Brookes Island, and on the next day on the north-west of the North Barnard Isles, in the latter case with the object of getting a species of *Ptiloris* peculiar to the island, and Mr. Masters was so fortunate as to procure a male and two female specimens in the course of the afternoon. The next stage was Fitzroy Island, where a few birds were obtained; but much progress was prevented by the dense brushwood, which was also found in Palm Island.

On the next day the *Chevert* anchored off a low wooded sandbank, marked on the chart "Low Wooded Isle." It was surrounded by an extensive coral reef, the first seen on the voyage. They afterwards reached Turtle Reef, opposite the Endeavour River, passing a belt of country on the mainland which looks very promising. A belt of low land near the coast was backed up by steep hills of about 2,000 feet elevation, the whole densely wooded, with numerous landships, showing a dark red soil. On June 8th, Number 4 Howick Group was reached, after passing a mainland which consisted, for a long distance back, of bare sandhills with elevated patches, forming Capes Bedford, Flattery, and Lookout. The next stage was Flinders Island, near which the land is very rough and rocky. Two days took them to Cape Grenville, where they supplied themselves with water. The weather being stormy and wet, not many specimens were procured. The land in the neighbourhood is the most barren that can be imagined. The rock is a kind of metamorphic sandstone, with sometimes a sub-horizontal stratification, quite vertical on the hills, with sharp laminated edges. The vegetation is scanty, the lower hills being clothed with coarse grass, dwarf grevilleas, &c.; the higher ranges being thinly clothed with acacias, banksias, and pandanus; the declivities and gullies alone being densely wooded; whilst near the water's edge the mangrove predominates. The natives are tolerably numerous, and for Australians above the average, well grown and developed. They know a little English, can appreciate tobacco and biscuits, and are good workers. They adopt the practice of cutting the ear-lobe into thin strips, as do the natives of Cape York, the islands of the Torres Straits, and New Guinea.

On the 18th of June, after sailing through Albany Passage, the *Chevert* anchored in Mud Bay. The settlement of Somerset, of which some years ago the Government had hopes, has proved unsuccessful, except as a pearl fishery, on which occupation about 700 men are employed. The fishing-ground lies almost entirely to the west of Cape York, and extends from Endeavour Straits and the Gulf of Carpentaria northwards to the very shores of New Guinea. Diving dresses are much employed in the fishery.

The vessel was detained in Mud Bay till June 26th for the Sydney mail. Not much collecting-work was accomplished in the densely-wooded, but *pauvre* neighbourhood, which is entirely composed of a very hard ferruginous sandstone. She then took a course due north to Warrior Island, a distance of sixty miles, stopping off the Sue Islands, where the anchorage is perfectly covered with masses of the young pearl shells. Warrior Island is a mere sandbank of small extent, and without vegetation; but it is the birthplace and home of the strongest, most numerous, and most adventurous of the races inhabiting the Torres Straits, who closely resemble the inhabitants of New Guinea.

On June 28th the *Chevert* proceeded on its course to New Guinea, making for the entrance to the Katow River. They dropped anchor 1½ miles from the mouth of that river, and the village of Mohatta. The following morning they were visited by two canoes with about twelve men in each. In one was Maino, the head-man of the village, in the other Owta, the head-man of a village three miles further west. They came on board with the utmost confidence, though they could never have seen so big

a vessel before. It was explained to them, through interpreters, that the visit was a friendly one, with no other object than the collection of specimens; both Maino and Owta expressing a desire to assist, and inviting the crew ashore. Shortly afterwards twenty-two of the men landed in the fishing and surf boats, and were received at the village by the elder members of the tribe seated in a circle upon a large piece of new matting. They would not join in the company and participate in the smoking; those forming the circle consequently arose, perhaps not the best pleased.

The village consists of seven houses, exactly like those described by Jukes in the voyage of the *Fly*. Each house is ninety or 100 feet long, elevated about 6 feet from the ground, and covered with a thick thatch. The ends are open, and on each side are the sleeping places of the inmates. Each house holding about 50 people, so the population of the village must have been about 350. The houses are built near the sea, and are everywhere surrounded by mud, filth, and stench. The people are powerful and well made, jet black, with straight foreheads and Jewish noses, the projecting jaws of the Australian being absent. The hair is woolly, but grows in small tufts, which, when long, form close, compact ringlets; and it is not uncommon for the people, not here only, but at Warrior and Darnley Islands, to cut off their hair when thus grown into ringlets, and convert it into a wig for their own use. The men are quite naked; some being marked like the Australians with seams on the shoulders, all cutting the lobes of their ears into fantastic shapes and piercing the rim all round, and ornamenting it with coloured wool or fibre. They seem fond of ornaments of birds' feathers for the head, and necklets of pearl-shell. The women are kept from the view of strangers, but they are in no way beautiful. They are the hewers of wood and drawers of water. Their clothing is a scanty loin-covering, with ornaments of cassowary feathers round the knees and ankles.

Almost the only weapons of defence are bamboo bows and four-feet arrows. They use kava, said to be obtained some distance up the country. They are great navigators, their canoes, of great size, being formed of excavated trunks of large coral trees (*Erythrina*). Their supply of animal food is chiefly from pigs, which, both wild and tame, are numerous.

The appearance of the country is the same everywhere. In some places the mangrove seems to grow out into the sea; in others, as at Mohatta, there is a beach closely belted by coconut palms, and behind, everywhere the same absolutely level mud flat, without the slightest apparent rise as far as the eye can reach, and all densely covered with trees of all sizes and kinds, never reaching more than three or four feet above the sea and river level. The driest spots have been selected by the natives for their banana and taro plantations. They also cultivate yams, sago, and bread-fruit.

All efforts to penetrate the jungle proving ineffectual, an attempt was made to navigate the river in a steam launch and surf boat. At its mouth the Katow is about 200 yards wide, rapidly narrowing to 60 yards, and soon to 30 yards. For the first two miles Mr. Macleay and his party, accompanied by Maino and Owta, passed through a dense forest of mangrove, beyond which the river was edged by a palm nearly 50 feet in height. Behind these was the lofty and interminable forest. After ascending the river for between eight and nine miles they were abruptly stopped by a tree of great size which had fallen, or been felled, across the river. They had to return in order to obtain instruments for removing the obstruction. As they in this however never succeeded, they had to return to Warrior Island, whence they made for Darnley Island, at which place some successful dredging was accomplished. This they left on Aug. 13 for Hall Sound, on the east side of the Gulf of Papua, which they reached after much difficulty from adverse winds. The ship's captain declined to go further on this account. Yule Island forms the sea face of this Sound, and the opening on the north side between the island and the main is merely a shallow sandbank. The anchor was dropped close to the north-west point of the island, opposite the residence of Signor D'Albertis, the enthusiastic Italian naturalist, which can be seen perched on the side of a clear hill, about 100 feet above the water. Signor D'Albertis had established himself on Yule Island some months previously, in this his second expedition to New Guinea, and though, as Mr. Macleay tells us, he has encountered serious difficulties from the desertion of most of his men, the loss of his boat, and robbery by the natives, he still persists in holding his ground and prosecuting the object of his wanderings—the collection of objects of natural history. Assuredly if pluck, per-

severance, and determination can command success, Signor D'Albertis ought to be successful.

The island is about six miles long, picturesque, and healthy-looking. The soil is rich, and the plantations of the natives are numerous. The geological formation consists entirely of a calcareous sedimentary rock, containing numerous remains closely resembling recent forms. The appearance of the opposite shore of New Guinea is very different from that at Katow. Mangrove swamps are intersected by salt-water creeks, with low ranges of well-wooded open forests behind; beyond which the country seemed to become very rough and mountainous, with a stupendous mountain chain, on a clear day distinctly visible from the magnificent peak of Mount Yule on the west, to Mount Owen Stanley on the east. The natives of the country hereabouts are light-coloured, of medium size and active. Their hair is not woolly, and is generally worn long, being tied up in a chignon behind. They do not use tobacco, but chew the betel leaf. They wear a very tight belt, carrying a small piece of cloth. They seem to be timid and inoffensive, greedy and thievish. The women appear to be the rulers, and they are far from reticent in the presence of strangers. Some of the younger ones are tolerably good-looking; they wear showy loin dresses, and are tattooed about the breasts and belly. Their villages and houses are clean, and generally on sloping ground; they have a house in every village for the reception of guests; their mutual relations seem most friendly. They pay considerable attention to cookery, and manufacture pottery, cloths, and nets of excellent quality.

Mr. Macleay remained on Yule Island until Sept. 2, collecting and exploring. No Birds of Paradise were obtained, although many plumes were seen in the hands of natives. No Tree Kangaroo nor Cassowary was seen. He then, on account of adverse winds, returned to Cape York, and so terminated this unsuccessful attempt to explore New Guinea.

It may be mentioned that Dr. James, the surgeon, Mr. Knight, one of the botanists, and Mr. Pollard, one of the taxidermists from the *Chevert*, have undertaken an independent expedition to New Guinea on their own account, which though so much more unassuming than the one above described, may on that account have greater chance of success.

### NOTES

DR. GEORGE BENNETT, of Sydney, has been in correspondence with Signor D'Albertis, the Italian naturalist now residing on Yule Island, off S.E. New Guinea. From him we learn that Sig. D'Albertis is on most friendly terms with the islanders; that he has made several excursions on to the main land, though in so doing he has been much delayed on account of his boat having been stolen by four of his own men. He afterwards, however, managed to purchase a canoe, and has visited five villages, the language of the natives of which he can now speak pretty well. On the coast he finds a fauna and flora much resembling North Australia, but inland, on the mountains, the Papuan vegetation predominates. He has succeeded in obtaining a perfect specimen of his new bird of paradise, *Paridisia raggiana*, and has shot a second specimen of the ground tree-kangaroo, *Dorcopsis luctuosa*. His health is excellent; but an Italian companion has suffered from fever and slight sunstroke.

LIEUT. CAMERON has earned a high place as an explorer by the work which he has so successfully and so quietly accomplished. It will be remembered that Cameron was sent out in 1873 to find Livingstone, whose fate was then unknown. On his way to Tanganyika he learnt the fate of the great traveller, but continued westwards and determined to carry out an exploration on his own account. After surveying a great part of Lake Tanganyika and discovering what he thought was likely to prove an outlet to the westward, he proceeded to the Lualaba for the purpose of finding out whether that river is connected with the Congo or the Nile system. The latest news that Sir Henry Rawlinson had to announce in his address to the Geographical Society about a month ago was that at the end of May 1874, Cameron had finally left Ujiji for the West. The telegrams just received are very brief, and announce that he came out at

Benguela and reached Loanda on Nov. 19, with fifty-seven followers, "all well." Cameron was forced by adverse circumstances to abandon the Congo route, and followed the water-sheds between the Zambesi and Congo. He has thus accomplished the rare feat of marching right across the continent, and will no doubt bring home many additions to our knowledge of central tropical Africa.

THE Professorship of Physiology in the University of Glasgow will be vacant at the end of the present session on account of the resignation of Dr. Andrew Buchanan.

WE have received from Prof. Mohn, Christiania, a printed paper giving a brief *résumé* of the meteorology of Norway for 1874. Monthly results of temperature are stated for forty-one stations, and of rainfall for thirty stations, and these results are compared with averages of previous years for those stations at which observations have been continued for some time. These forty-one stations show an increase in the number of the stations of previous years, and we have much satisfaction in learning that, as the result of a recent special grant by the Norwegian Government, the stations have still further increased to fifty, and that each of them has been furnished with minimum thermometers and with new thermometer screws. Of the stations sixteen are supplied with Fortin's barometer, sixteen with the Kew barometer, thirty-one with wind-vanes and velocity-plates, thirty-seven with rain-gauges, thirty-two with dry and wet bulb hygrometers, nine of the coldest stations with hair hygrometers, and all of the fifty with aneroids. In Prof. Mohn's energetic and able hands highly valuable results may be looked for from these changes and additions in the further development of the meteorology of Norway, which plays so prominent a part in the meteorology of Europe.

THE *American Naturalist*—the recognised organ of intercommunication between naturalists in America—will pass, at the commencement of the coming year, into the hands of Messrs. H. O. Houghton and Co., of Cambridge, Mass. It will still be under the able editorship of Dr. A. S. Packard, jun., who will be assisted by a number of eminent men of science, in all departments. Indeed, the list of expected contributors for 1876 is a very strong one. The amount of matter in each number will be increased, and articles will be introduced of a more popular character than heretofore. We are glad to take this opportunity of again calling the attention of English naturalists to this excellent periodical.

M. DUMAS, the distinguished Perpetual Secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, has been elected a member of the Académie Française in room of the late M. Guizot. Science has now two representatives amongst the grandees of French literature—M. Claude Bernard and M. Dumas.

SIR HENRY RAWLINSON, President of the Geographical Society, has been elected a foreign member of the Geographical Society of Paris.

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* is informed that Mr. Max Müller has been asked to accept a professorship at Florence, at the highest salary ever offered to a professor in Italy.

A TELEGRAM dated Adelaide, the 18th inst., states that Mr. Giles's exploring expedition (see vol. xii. pp. 135, 194), fitted out by the Hon. Thos. Elder, M.L.C., has arrived at Perth, Western Australia, direct from Adelaide. This is the third expedition that has crossed Central Australia within the last two years. The first was that under Col. Warburton, from the telegraph line westwards, generally between 20° and 21° S. lat.; then Mr. Forrest crossed from Perth to the telegraph line by a route about 5° farther south. Mr. Giles's route, we believe, has been much farther south than Mr. Forrest's; judging from previous news, probably about 100 miles from the south coast.